

THE IDENTITY OF *ALOE SERETI* DE WILD.

By G. W. REYNOLDS.

(With Plates XIX and XX.)

This was one of the five species of *Aloe* collected by Dr. J. Bequaert in 1914 in the Belgian Congo. It was described by De Wildeman in his *Plantae Bequaertianae* 1: 28 (1921). Two localities were given: Irumu, 2 July 1914, (J. Bequaert No. 4893—grassy savanna, on rocks, flowers carmine-red); and "Route between Bo and Congo, 28 October 1905, F. Seret No. 299." No type is stated.

Professor W. Robyns, Director of the Jardin Botanique de l'Etat, Brussels, informed me that Seret 299 is the type, and that the type locality is near Amadi, west of Niangara, in the Uele District.

There were no figures, and the description does not give the size of the plant, the number of leaves, or their markings if any.

Irumu is in the Oriental Province, Kibali-Ituri District, of the Belgian Congo, about 60 miles west of Lake Albert (Kasenyi), on the south bank of the Shari River, at about 1° 20' N., 29° 50' E., alt. 3,100 ft.

Before leaving on my Congo-Sudan expedition I communicated with Dr. Bequaert, who kindly informed me that "*A. Sereti* grew on rocks in a grass-savanna (mostly *Andropogon*), 2 hours walk north of Irumu. This was an acaulescent species, with leaves in a rosette, leaves green without blotches. The locality "2 hours walk north of Irumu" was on a pathway serving as a road in 1914 between Irumu and Kilo, and about halfway between Irumu and a village called Pania." Dr. Bequaert also kindly sent me a sketch he had made in 1914, of a flower with pedicel and bract, natural size.

On 2 July 1954 I arrived in Irumu and succeeded in tracing the old track to Pania village. Crossing the Shari River, and walking northwards up hill and down dale for two hours along the old Pania footpath, I eventually reached a granite hill known to local natives as "Mbeye", where numbers of *Aloes* were found, many being in flower. The distance north of Irumu would be 6—7 miles. This was clearly Dr. Bequaert's locality, and flowers matched his sketch.

Photographs were secured, herbarium material gathered, and a full description drawn up on the spot. (On a nearby hilltop, *A. Dawei* Berger = *A. beniensis* De Wild. was also found.)

The following day I journeyed eastwards to Bunia, thence north-eastwards along the road to Nioka. I found the species again half a mile south-

west of Chief Libi's village which is 8 miles north-east of Fataki and 14 miles south-west of Nioka Post Office, at 5,800 ft., on granite. At this locality plants were mostly in bud on 4 July 1954, but a few were found in flower. Bracts were larger and more fleshy, and young buds were entirely hidden by densely imbricate bracts. Herbarium material was gathered at this locality also.

Four miles north-east of Libi's village (10 miles south-west of Nioka) large numbers were again seen on granite.

Near Adranga, and along the Congo-Sudan border, a closely allied but distinct species, *A. Schweinfurthii* Bak., takes over.

The following description is based on plants near Bunia and near Fataki:

A. Sereti De Wild. in *Plantae Berquaertianae* 1: 28 (1921).

Stem none or short, suckering from base and forming small to large dense groups on rocks.

Leaves about 16, densely rosulate, erectly spreading, with upper quarter recurved and with a twist, lanceolate-attenuate, averaging 40 cm. long, 6—7 cm. broad at base; *upper surface* flat low down, canaliculate upwards, grey bluish-green with a reddish tinge, mostly without spots, sometimes obscurely dull white-spotted; *lower surface* convex, similar in colour to upper surface, mostly without spots; *margins* sinuate-dentate with pinkish edge, armed with pungent deltoid teeth which are white at base and reddish brown-tipped, averaging 3—4 mm. long, 8—10 mm. distant, more crowded near base of leaf, more distant upwards, the interspaces rounded.

Inflorescence a sparsely branched panicle 60—70 cm. high.

Peduncle brown, minutely speckled, flattened and 15 mm. diam. at base, mostly compactly 3-branched from the middle or lower (sometimes 4-branched), the lowest branch subtended at base by a broadly ovate-acute subscarious many-nerved bract 25 mm. broad, 12 mm. long.

Raceme cylindric-conical, 15—20 cm. long, 5—6 cm. diam., subdensely flowered, the apical buds covered by densely imbricate bracts, older buds grey-green tipped and horizontally disposed, the open flowers subpendulous.

Bracts ovate-acute, pink, rather fleshy, varying from 9—15 mm. long, and from 5—10 mm. broad, with 3—5 pinkish nerves.

Pedicels nutant at apex, 14—18 mm. long, the colour of the perianth.

Perianth dull to bright scarlet, cylindric-trigonous, 28—33 mm. long, obtusely tapering at base and shortly stipitate, 7 mm. diam. across the ovary, thence very slightly narrowed on underside only, the mouth wide open; *outer segments* free for 9—10 mm., obscurely nerved, the apices

subacute; *inner segments* themselves free but dorsally adnate to the outer for two-thirds their length, broader than the outer, scarlet-keeled, and with more obtuse more spreading apices.

Filaments pale rose turning lemon near the mouth, the 3 inner narrower and lengthening before the 3 outer, with their *anthers* in turn exerted 1—3 mm.

Style pale yellow, with *stigma* at length exerted 3—4 mm.

Ovary green, 5 mm. long $2\frac{1}{2}$ mm. diam.

MATERIAL.

Belgian Congo: Oriental Province, Kibali-Ituri Dist., on Mbeye hill, 2 hours' walk north of Irumu on old track to Pania village, fl. 2 July 1954, Reynolds 7280 (PRE, K, BR, EA); near Chief Libi's village 8 miles north-east of Fataki (14 miles south-west of Nioka P.O.), fl. 4 July 1954, Reynolds 7281 (PRE, K, BR).

KEY.

A. Sereti De Wild., *A. Schweinfurthii* Bak. (from the Congo-Sudan border), and *A. mubendiensis* Christian (from the Toro district of western Uganda), comprise a natural group of three closely allied species.

These three species were found only on rocks, in crevices and shallow pockets of soil, while in habit of growth and leaf characters they are scarcely separable. In inflorescence characters they can be distinguished as under:

- | | |
|--|---------------------------|
| Inflorescence 60—70 cm., 3-branched, racemes
with youngest buds covered by densely
imbricate bracts | <i>A. Sereti.</i> |
| Inflorescence 90 cm., 8—10-branched, racemes
more laxly flowered, all buds visible, bracts
smaller and not imbricate | <i>A. Schweinfurthii.</i> |
| Inflorescence with about 8 subobliquely spread-
ing branches, racemes 8—10 cm. with
flowers slightly secund, bracts very small | <i>A. mubendiensis.</i> |

NATIVE NAME.

Abungubete (Amadi) *vide* De Wildeman.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT.

I am indebted to the South African Council for Scientific and Industrial Research for a travelling grant which enabled me to investigate many of the Aloes of Tropical Africa. *A. Sereti* was one of them.



Fig. 1.

PLATE XIX. *Aloe Serotini* De Wild.

Fig. 1. Plants 6—7 miles north of Irumu, Belgian Congo, fl. 2 July, 1954, $\times 1/10$ approx.
 Fig. 2. Flowers 1/1 from bud to post-pollination stage.

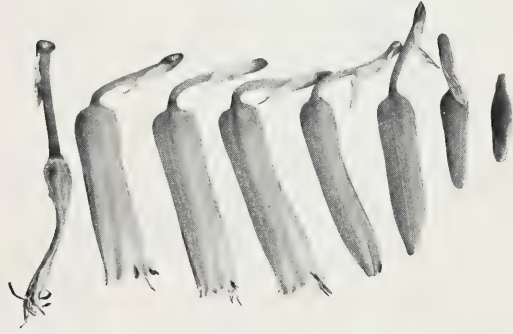


Fig. 2.



FIG. 1.

PLATE XX. *A. Serati* De Wild.

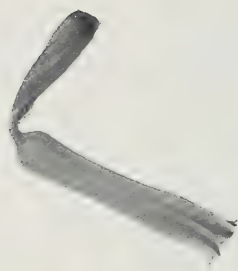


FIG. 2.

FIG. 1. Plant $\times 1/10$ approx., fl. 4 July, 1954, 8 miles north-east of Fataki, 14 miles south-west of Nioka, Belgian Congo.

FIG. 2. Flower with pedicel and bract $1/1$.